

VIEWPOINTS



OUR VIEW: WE RECOMMEND CANDIDATES FOR GOVERNOR, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR 2F

CAMPAIGN 2010

Is Davis smart to buck tradition?



In his run for governor, Artur Davis didn't seek the endorsements of Alabama's major black political groups.

Strategy will have ramifications beyond this election

By GLEN BROWDER

Alabama political pundits are shaking their heads over Artur Davis' startling strategy for moving into the Alabama governor's office. The African-American candidate has gone out of his way to stiff the major black political organizations in the state.

Davis obviously thinks he can craft a winning biracial coalition without the endorsements of the Alabama Democratic Conference, the Alabama New South Coalition, the Jefferson County Citizens Coalition and the Jefferson County Progressive

Council.

He, therefore, has antagonized many powerful black leaders. Joe Reed, ADC founder and chairman, complains that Davis "decided he'd rather go for the white vote, rather than the black vote." Reed predicts that Davis cannot win the governorship. Powerful state Sen. Hank Sanders, co-founder of the New South, is equally adamant: "Artur Davis has stomped on us time after time." Former Birmingham Mayor Richard Arrington, another co-

See DAVIS | Page 4F



PRESS-REGISTER/MIKE KITTRELL

Beachgoers are waiting to see what effect the BP oil spill will have on Alabama's beaches along the Gulf Coast.

OIL SPILL IN THE GULF

Don't drop your visit to Gulf Coast

By LUCY "LULU" BUFFETT

I can't remember when we have had a lovelier spring along the Gulf Coast.

In recent years, we have gone from crisp, clear mornings in February to tropical 90s temps by mid-March. But this year, it finally seemed we were getting back to normal — back to the easy, Southern rhythms of my childhood, with the winter season moving gently into a luscious spring.

Spring was taking its own sweet time unfolding before diving head-on into the desperate heat of summer.

Everyone could feel it. You couldn't help but notice the majesty and color of the coastal foliage bursting with brilliant pinks and purples, sounding the calls that we wait for all year long: "Let's go to the beach!" "The fish are biting at the Big Mouth!" "Let's take a boat ride!" "Tadpoles are out in the creek!"

That is how we live here on the Gulf Coast. Our love of the water — the Gulf, the bays, the rivers, the estuaries — and the way we enjoy it are absolutely holistic. It transcends race, religion, socioeconomic status, age, gender and political affiliation.

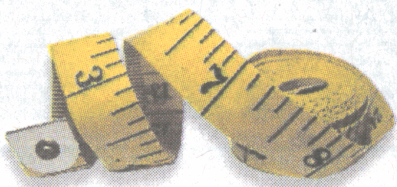
The Gulf Coast is where the everyday person can play. We love where we live and are proud of it.

We get amused sharing it and seeing the surprise on folks' faces when they realize that a little piece of unlikely paradise exists smack at the bottom of this magnificent country of ours.

So imagine our dismay, anger, grief and absolute heartbreak over the ongoing catastrophe of crude oil continuously and arrogantly flowing into our beautiful Gulf of Mexico. This is indeed a major challenge for us physically, emotionally, environmentally and economically.

Personally, I prefer to remain positive about the oil spill's impact, because I know mountains can be moved with a positive attitude. Why wouldn't that work with a runaway well? I do, however, live in a very real world, and I know our corner of this world stands to be affected by the oil spill.

See GULF | Page 4F



BATTLE OF THE BULGE

America is fat and getting fatter. And everyone is weighing in with solutions. Even lawyers. But can we sue our way to better health?

By ALAN BLUM

"I figured it out," a heavyset patient once joked, "I'm 329 pounds, and at my weight I should be 8 feet 7 inches tall. So I'm not fat, I'm short."

But obesity is no laughing matter. It's a major risk factor for heart disease and diabetes, and it is even linked to cancer of the breast and colon. Alabama has the nation's second highest prevalence of adult obesity (31.2 percent, after Mississippi's 32.5 percent) and ranks sixth in the percentage of overweight and obese children (36.1 percent).

Nationally, the prevalence of obesity — Americans who are 30 or more pounds above a healthy weight — has doubled in the past 20 years. The percentage of overweight adolescents has tripled since 1980. Men now weigh on average 17 pounds more than they did 30 years ago, and women weigh 19 pounds more. And it costs us all dearly: \$150 billion a year, or almost 10 percent of all medical spending, up from 6.5 percent a decade ago.

As America's children get fatter, everyone from first lady Michelle Obama to the food industry is weighing in with solutions. Earlier this month, the first lady's Childhood Obesity Task Force, aiming to reduce the obesity rate to 5 percent by 2030, issued several recommendations, including more farmers' markets, cash incentives to convenience stores in low-income areas to stock more fresh produce and

See OBESITY | Page 4F

ABOUT THE WRITER

Alan Blum, M.D., is a professor and endowed chair in Family Medicine and director of the University of Alabama's Center for the Study of Tobacco and Society.

E-mail: ablum@cchs.ua.edu

CORNER HIGH SCHOOL

True measure of teacher is guidance

Students owed a real discussion of violence

By STEPHANIE JACKSON

Like most people, I have an inside joke with my best friend. Every time I come across a news story of a teacher doing something stupid and getting in trouble, I post it on her Facebook wall and make insinuations that she, an education policy master's student, could end up in a story just like that one day.

It was a wry smile that passed my

face the day I had to post a story from my own alma mater, Corner High School, on her wall. The story of geometry teacher Gregory Harrison's suspension has been all over the news in Birmingham, but it took a little longer to reach me here in Georgia, where I just completed my bachelor's degree in journalism at the University of Georgia.

I remember the teacher we called Coach Harrison. He was a nice man, and even though I never had a class with him myself, I remember positive things about him from our few-and-far-between meetings. I agree with the

messages of his students. I remember him coming in early and staying late to work with struggling students and, in general, I remember him being a friendly guy.

Despite the fond memories I have of Harrison, when a close friend shared the story with me, I wasn't surprised. It didn't shock me a teacher could get so wrapped up in trying to make geometry seem "cool" that he uses such an unacceptable analogy to teach angles. I was even less surprised the school system originally did nothing to

See TEACHER | Page 4F

INSIDE

Helping hands

If you want to talk about family values and public service, go take a look at what the YWCA of Central Alabama is doing in Woodlawn, writes The News' Robin DeMonia. 2F

Healthy living in Southside

It's time to really turn Five Points South into a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly neighborhood, writes resident Jimmy Stout. 4F

al! MORE OPINION ON AL.COM

Want to respond directly to an editorial or comment on a letter? Go to www.al.com/opinion/birmingham.